

## RUSSIA AND THE WEST IN IRAN

the countries of exploitation." Hence, he argued, "The oriental policy of the Soviet government is not an opportunistic maneuver but a sincere endeavor to help the downtrodden masses of the East in their struggle against the oppressors."

As the third principal speaker Bela Kun presented the "Theses on Soviet Authority in the East." The Theses laid stress on the agrarian revolution and hailed the institution of the Soviet as a form of government to be promoted in the colonies and semicolonies. Native bourgeoisie, together with foreign exploiters, was attacked with particular vigor.

Following these principal declarations many other delegates held the floor. Through their mouths the Orient manifested its hostility to Western imperialism. There was, however, little genuine discussion inasmuch as declarations had been prepared in advance by the Communists heading various national groups. This Moscow-patterned unanimity was disrupted only once during the nominations to the newly created Council of Action and Propaganda in the East. When Zinoviev presented the list of candidates for acceptance, one among the audience shouted: "*Ot Persii niepravilno*" ("In the case of Persia it is irregular"). This was the only dissenting voice. The chairman hushed the resulting commotion and declared that the candidates had been unanimously elected by those present.

In the perspective of nearly thirty years since the Baku Congress, one may evaluate it with more detachment than did the Western statesmen at the time. The Congress was important more as a symbol than as a practical action. The oriental delegates were not yet ready

to understand and accept everything that was said to them by the fiery Marxist trio from Moscow. They were not a homogeneous group. Linguistic barriers separated them, despite the efforts of a group of interpreters to translate the speeches. The Communism outwardly professed by some of them was but a thin layer superimposed on a deep oriental base. Others were simply non-Communists. Their loyalties were still deeply rooted in the traditional structure of their societies. The delegates resented Zinoviev's attack on Islam and Bela Kun's denunciation of monarchy. The only thing they understood well was the Communist hostility toward the British. The Congress